

The Case and The Girl

By Randall Parrish

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INTO A TRAP

SYNOPSIS.—Answering an advertisement calling for a young man willing to engage in service of danger, Matthew West, ex-service man just returned from France, where he had been captain of engineers, meets Natalie Coolidge, writer of the advertisement, and without being instructed as to his probable duties, is engaged by her, and that same evening introduced to her friends as her fiance. That night, in the Coolidge home, West is startled by the appearance in his room of a young woman, whom he takes to be Natalie. Next morning Natalie tells West she has been troubled by some woman, apparently her double, who has been impersonating her. Percival Coolidge, Natalie's uncle and guardian, is disgruntled by West's appearance as Natalie's fiance. Natalie, Coolidge and West plan a visit of charity. Leaving West in the car, Natalie and Coolidge enter a small cottage. Before they return, West secures information which leads him to believe Coolidge is deceiving Natalie for a purpose. Natalie informs West she has been mistaken in her suspicions and that she has no further need for his services. West is astounded, but leaves. On his way out of the grounds, West hears a revolver shot, and finds Percival Coolidge dead, apparently a suicide. In the city West is visited by Sexton, an old servant of the Coolidges. Sexton tells him he has been abruptly dismissed, for no apparent reason. He thinks Coolidge was murdered.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"Where was it the three of you went on Sunday in the runabout, Captain West?" asked Sexton.

"To a house over in the factory district; some charity case that Coolidge was interested in—the widow of one of his employees, I believe.

"Did you see the people?"

"No, I didn't go in; waited outside in the car; it was no affair of mine. Why?" he asked in surprise.

"Because, sir, Miss Natalie seemed like a different person when she got back. Not in looks, or nothing like that, I don't mean, but in the way she talked and acted. Nothing suited her all the rest of the day. You know how she was to you, sir. Well, she was just that snappy with all of us, even after we brought the body back to the house. And she wouldn't look at him, sir, not even after he was dressed proper and laid out."

"I hardly believe," said West thoughtfully, "you can attribute her state of mind to anything that occurred on that trip. Indeed she was in high spirits all the way home."

"I can't help that, sir," Sexton insisted blithely. "It was something that happened yesterday what set her wrong, an' if I was you, sir, I'd find out what happened in that house first of all. Could you find the place?"

"Yes, I think so. I'll look it up, although I don't have much faith in your theory." He glanced at his watch. "I'll go out there now. You come back here about five, and we will talk over any discoveries I may make."

"And what shall I do, sir?"

Both were standing, West with hand on the knob of the door. The light in his eyes hardened.

"Nothing occurs to me now, Sexton, unless you can find an excuse to return to Fairlawn, after something you have forgotten, let us say. If we can learn what Miss Natalie proposes doing it might furnish a clue."

"Very well, sir, and I am to be here at five o'clock?"

"Yes, at five; I will leave word to the doorman to show you in at once."

West picked up a taxi-cab for the trip, bidding the chauffeur to drive to a certain section of the city, and then up and down the various streets until told to stop. His conversation with Sexton had greatly strengthened his conviction that this was a murder, and he had determined to ferret out the truth if possible. Yet, thus far there was nothing to build upon, no clue, no motive, no suspicion as to who had perpetrated the deed. He simply faced a blank wall, in which no entrance was apparent, yet there must be one, if he was only fortunate enough to stumble upon it. Deep down in his heart West was conscious that he possessed a motive in this search far more worthy than mere curiosity. That motive was Natalie Coolidge. He smiled at the thought, yet confessed it true. In spite of her curt dismissal, the memory of the girl centered about those earlier hours of their acquaintance. Something mysterious had occurred to make her change so quickly, and he was unwilling to condemn her before learning the real reason.

The chauffeur drove slowly up and down obscure streets for half an hour before West recognized familiar surroundings, and motioned for him to draw up against the curb. He had discovered the place sought, but from the street it exhibited no signs of occupancy, nor did any knocking at the front door bring response from within. He circled the building. Every door was locked, but, as he passed along the other side to regain the taxi, a man emerged from the next house, and hailed him.

"Say, what're yer snoopin' round there for? Lookin' for somebody?"

"Yes, the parties who were here Sunday. What's become of them?"

"Hobart, you mean?"

"Is that his name? I met him downtown, and he told me to come here."

West explained rapidly. "We had a deal on."

"Oh, yer did, say," leaning his arms on the fence. "Well, Jim Hobart was the name he giv' me. That's my name, too."

which is why I happen to know what his name was. Something queer about that fellow, I reckon, but 'tain't none o' my business. You ain't a detective, or nothin' like that, are yer?"

"Nothing at all like that," West laughed, although interested. "Why? Did you think the police might be after him?"

"Not for anything I know about, only he skipped out mighty sudden. Paid me a month's rent, and only stayed there three days. That looks sorter queer. Then Sunday that fellow what committed suicide out south—I read about it in the papers—came to see him in a car, I got a boy workin' in his factory, that's how I come to know who the guy was. The next night Hobart, an' them with him, just naturally skipped out."

"Who did he have with him here—a family?"

"A woman 'bout his age, I should say, an' a younger one. I didn't see 'em only from the window; didn't get no sight o' the girl's face at all, but could tell the way she walked she was young. They didn't have nothin' with 'em; that's all my stuff in the house there."

Feeling the uselessness of trying to learn anything more, West thanked him, and returned to the taxi.

"Back to the club," he ordered briefly, and settled into his seat to think.

The information thus gained had been small enough, yet sufficient to stimulate his belief that he was at least upon the right trail. The sudden departure of this man Hobart, and the fact that no young children were in the family, were important items to consider. Coolidge, then, had not visited this cottage to aid a widow and orphan. There had been some other object in his call. The girl must have known and understood the real purpose; that was why they both acquiesced so readily to his remaining outside in the car. It was part of their mutual plan to thus leave him in ignorance. Yet they had made a mistake in taking him along at all. This error alone gave him now an opportunity to unravel the riddle. But did it? What did he know? Merely that Coolidge had not gone to this house on an errand of charity; that the occupant called himself, temporarily, perhaps, Jim Hobart; that his family consisted of two women, undescribed except as to age; and that all three had mysteriously disappeared together. He might take it for granted that this disappearance was caused by the death of Coolidge, but they had left no trail, no inkling as to where they had gone. He might suspect this sudden vanishing had direct connection with the crime he was endeavoring to solve, but he possessed absolutely no proof, and, apparently, any further movement on his part was completely blocked.

More puzzled than ever, although now fully convinced that murder had been committed, West could do nothing but wait the reappearance of Sexton. The latter arrived promptly on time, and West told his story. His listener seemed to sense the situation clearly.

"It wasn't no mistake, your goin' out there, sir," he said confidently. "What we know now gives us something to work on anyhow, an' it's just what I thought—that trip Sunday led up to this killin', an' something happened while they was in there to stir Miss Natalie all up. Now we got to find this fellow—what did you say his name was, sir?"

"Hobart—Jim Hobart; that is, he was known by that name there."

"And did you say he has simply dropped out o' sight?"

"That's true; never left a clue behind him."

"Well, sir, I'm not quite so sure about that. You listen to me, sir. This afternoon I walked out to Fairlawn from the car line, an' come in across the fields to the house. I didn't have no good excuse for goin' back there, sir, an' was sorter afraid to meet up with Miss Natalie. She might have thought I was spyin' round. But I didn't have no need for being afraid, for it seems she'd driven into town about noon, an' hadn't got back. There wasn't nobody but the servant around the place, sir. Do you remember Lizzie, the second maid—sorter full face, an' light hair?"

West nodded, wondering what all this might be leading to.

"Well, she an' I always hit it off together, an' I talked with her quite a bit. She told me, sir, that Miss Natalie had a telephone call this morning that took her into the city. Lizzie said she went to the phone when it rang, an' it was a man's voice. He wouldn't leave no message, but insisted on speaking to Miss Natalie. Lizzie had to call her down from upstairs."

"Did the girl overhear the conversation?"

"Not so as to make much out of it, sir. She was sorter interested, the man's voice being strange, and hung around in the hall listening, but about all she could make out was what Miss Natalie said. It seemed like he was givin' her some kind of a 'ch she didn't exactly understand, an' she repeated it after so three times to be sure."

"What was the address?"

"238 Ray street, sir, an' that's an hour later, Miss Natalie an' her car, an' drove into town."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir; it was the electric she took."

West remained silent, tapping with his knife on the table. This might prove important, and he could not afford to ignore the information. While to his mind it was hardly likely Hobart had called the girl, yet the possibility remained.

"I never heard of a Ray street," he said at length, "but of course, there may be one. Oh, Charlie," he stopped a waiter passing. "Bring me up a city directory, will you?"

The man returned with the book, placing it on a chair next West, who immediately began to inspect the volume.

"Ray street," he said doubtfully, fingering the pages. "There is no such street here, Sexton. Are you sure you got that right?"

"That's what she said, sir; I made her say it over twice."

"Ray Street; wonder if it could be spelled with a W? By jove, it is—Wray! Here we have it, only five blocks long, extending from Conway to Grogan. Rather tough section I should judge. It wouldn't do any harm to take a look around there. Perhaps that is where Hobart went; he might have been the one calling Natalie. Rather a wild guess, but it will give us something to do. Are you game, Sexton?"

"Quite so, sir."

West hardly took the adventure seriously, being more influenced by curiosity than any other motive, but Sexton was deeply in earnest, in full faith they were upon the right trail. Doubtful as he was, West had neglected no precautions. The map assured him that they were invading a disorderly section of the city, where to be well-dressed would only invite suspicion, and might lead to trouble. To avoid this possibility, he had donned his most shabby suit, and wore a cap largely concealing his face. In one pocket of his jacket within easy reach lay hidden his service revolver loaded, and he had induced Sexton to accept a smaller weapon in case of emergency.

The street was not inviting, the saloon on the corner being flanked by several small factories. The brick sidewalk was in bad condition, and lit-



"Well, What Is It You Fellers Want?"

tered with junk of all kinds, while the roadway was entirely uncared for, and deeply rutted from heavy traffic. Half way down the block was a tannery, closed now for the night, but with its odor yet permeating the entire atmosphere. Altogether, the scene was desolate and disagreeable enough, but the street was deserted of pedestrians, the factory doors tightly closed for the night.

The two men pressed their way through along a narrow passage, finding less obstruction as they advanced, the second block being composed entirely of houses, largely of the tenement type, and apparently principally populated by children.

Wray street was lined with homes, usually humble enough outwardly, yet the thoroughfare was clean, and the small yards had generally an appearance of neatness; 238 was a three-story brick, on the corner, the second story evidently utilized for living purposes, and the ground floor occupied as a saloon. The upper story exhibited no signs of occupancy, the windows unwashed, and two of them boarded up. The two lingered in uncertainty opposite the house. Standing there idly, however, did not appeal to West.

"Well, let's go over," he said impatiently. "There is nothing to be learned here."

It was an ordinary bar-room and their entrance apparently aroused no special interest. Besides the man behind the bar, a rather rough-looking foreigner, a Pole, in West's judgment, three customers were in the place, two with feet upon the rail talking with the drink dispenser, and one at a small table moodily contemplating a half emptied stein of beer. There were three other tables in the room, and the doctor which would be cheaper to set the leg or amputate—Chicago Journal.

bartender came forward around the end of the bar, while the man nearest shifted his position slightly so as to look them over, conversation instantly ceasing. Something indefinable in the fellow's attitude, and steady stare, gave West a feeling of hostility, which was not dispelled by the gruff greeting of the bartender.

"Well, what is it you fellers want?"

"A stein apiece, and a sandwich—you serve them, don't you?"

"Sure; ham or beef?"

"Ham."

There was no cordiality, no welcome in either manner or speech. It was plainly the proprietor of the saloon felt no enthusiasm over his unknown customers. He came back with the beer and sandwiches, pausing this time to wipe off the table, as an excuse for speech.

"You guys live 'round here?" he asked gruffly. "Don't remember ever seein' yer in here before."

"No," returned West indifferently, looking directly into the hard face. "I'm a smoke inspector, an' we just dropped in on our way back to the office, why?"

"Oh, nothin'; only we don't get much trade outside the neighborhood."

He walked back toward the bar, pausing an instant to whisper a word to the taller man who still stood there staring moodily at the table. What he said apparently determined action, for the fellow addressed crossed the room to where West and Sexton sat, deliberately pulled up a vacant chair and joined them.

"Bring me another, Mike," he ordered. "That is, if these gents don't object to my joinin' 'em awhile."

CHAPTER VIII

frapped.

West smiled pleasantly, glad the man had taken the initiative, thus naturally opening up a way for asking certain questions. Whatever his own immediate object might be in thus scrapping an acquaintance made no difference. It would doubtless develop in time, but meanwhile here was the opportunity sought to discuss the affairs of the neighborhood. Yet the subject must be approached with due caution. The very indifference of the bartender, coupled with the evident desire of this hanger-on to form an acquaintance, served to reveal the real nature of the place. Plainly enough strangers were viewed with suspicion, and this was no ordinary saloon, catering to whatever trade drifted within its doors. More than likely it was rather a thieves' hang-out, ever suspicious of the activity of the police.

Yet this fellow bore no outward semblance to the common conception of the underworld. He was well dressed, easy of manner, with an exceptionally intelligent face, blue eyes meeting West's gaze frankly, a carefully trimmed mustache, with white teeth good humoredly showing when he smiled, and threads of gray in his hair. His very appearance invited confidence and comradeship, while his outspoken words increased this impression.

"Excuse my buttin' in," he explained genially. "But it's a d—n dull around here tonight. Nobody to talk with but a couple o' bums. You see I don't belong around here; just dropped in for a bit of business with Mike."

"I see," admitted West, puzzled, and wondering how far he dared venture. "You can get lonelier in a big city than anywhere else."

"You bet you can. You see I run a broker's office downtown, an' it's pretty blame slow around a dump like this—you get me?"

"Sure; this seems to be a pretty quiet place."

"Quiet! H—! It isn't always so quiet. I've dropped in here when it was lively enough, believe me. But tonight it's the limit. Fact is I come up for a little excitement, as much as anything else, but must have struck an off night. You're a smoke inspector, Mike says?"

West nodded.

"Know Fred Karvan, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; friend of yours?"

"Used to be; we were kids together down on the South side. He's got a pretty soft job now; stands in strong with the City hall, they tell me. Mean to drop in and see him some of these days."

"You'll find him a mighty good fellow," asserted West, to whom the name was entirely unfamiliar.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that. He's got pretty stiff the last few years, they tell me. But then you work under him, and ought to know. Head of your department, isn't he?"

"Yes, but I only meet him in a business way, of course."

"And the ex-soldier went down as though hit with a pe-a-x."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Business Woman.

My father, an old doctor, has had many strange experiences in his career. I have often heard him tell this one: He had been called to see a man who had been severely hurt in a runaway. After examining the patient's injured limb, he was summoned into the next room by the patient's wife. She wished to inquire of the doctor which would be cheaper—to set the leg or amputate—Chicago Journal.



This is your corner. Make use of it for your information on questions that are puzzling you. It will be your pleasure and privilege to answer carefully and promptly all questions submitted to me. Your questions must be limited to two, and your full name and address must accompany each letter. For special information send stamped envelope. All communications will always be held in absolute confidence.

All letters should be addressed very plainly in pen and ink to Helen Brooks, Box 1545, Salt Lake City.

Helen Brooks

Dear Miss Brooks:

Will you please answer two questions for me. (1) Will you tell me all you can about the name "Roma," what it means, origin, etc. (2) What do the words "Sic fractus toris" mean? Thanking you in advance, I remain, PENELOPE, Utah.

I have been unable with the material at hand to find even the meaning of the name "Roma." If I find it later, however, I will tell you about it. "Sic fractus toris" is a Latin phrase meaning, "Thus perished the strong," or "Thus the strength of the greatest is broken."

Dear Miss Brooks,

I have been very interested in "Just Between You and Me," and have learned many things. My friends and I have some puzzling questions we will be very thankful if you would answer. We are sending them all together so please excuse the number. (1) What will remove ink stains from tan silk pongee? (2) Is it proper for a girl to speak a greeting first on passing a boy friend on the street or elsewhere? I am sending my name so you may send it to Bob and Bill. Wishing you lots of success, I am, GOLDEN LOCKS, Utah.

(1) Is it proper for a girl to say, thank you, at the close of a dance? (2) Can you advise a good method for waving or curling hair that will not harm the hair and that will save as much time as possible. Please send my name to Bob and Bill.

TINEY, Utah.

(1) Is it, (or if not why isn't it) proper to pick up a fork if you drop it at the table? (2) I am 16 years old, I have blue eyes, light long hair, I am slender and tall. Can you please tell me a fashion that I may dress my hair so it will become me and also be in style. I have a round face. Wishing you lots of success, I am, BLUE EYES, Utah.

I hope we haven't taken too much of your time and space. Do you answer personal letters that you don't put in the paper?

THREE FRIENDS.

Welcome girls. (1) I think you will find that the following will remove the ink without injuring the goods—wet with clear water, cover the spot with powdered cake of lemon, and let it remain a few minutes. Wash in clear water. (2) Yes, the girl should speak first.

(1) No, the young man should thank you. You may then tell him you also enjoyed the dance. (2) The fabric covered curtains are the best and least harmful. Of course it takes the same amount of time.

(1) If you are in a restaurant or cafe, the waiter will pick up the fork and hand you a clean one. If you are in a private home, where there are no servants, it is perfectly proper for you or the gentleman next to you to pick the fork up, and you hostess will hand you a clean one. Wave your hair softly and comb straight back from the face, letting it come well in front of the ears but do not puff it out. Fasten it low in the back and divide into two parts, cross these and form each into a twist across the head from ear to ear. Curl the ends and let them come from under the coil and to the left side.

Yes indeed girls I answer many more letters personally, than appear here each week.

Dear Miss Brooks,

I am a girl of fourteen. I weight about 102 lbs, and am 5 feet tall. I have light brown hair and blue eyes. Will you please suggest how I should do my hair and what colors should I wear? Thanking you in advance, I remain, PRUDENCE, Idaho.

You should wear bright blues, rose shades, light browns, black and violet shades nicely. Prudence, and I can suggest no prettier style than to arrange the hair softly around the face, braid a few inches from the head and fasten with a clasp leaving the curls and fringes. If your face is more long than round puff it with a comb, and back of head and fasten lightly close to the head, instead of braiding, and still leave the curled ends free.

Dear Miss Brooks,

I have enjoyed your corner for some time and would like you to answer some questions for me. (1) Is it proper for a boy to hold a girl's arm while walking on the streets? (2) Is it proper for a boy and girl to go to church together? (3) Upon being introduced to a boy's mother what should you do and say? Is it proper to shake hands with older persons whom you are introduced to? Hoping I am not too much bother, I remain, AN ARDENT ADMIRER, Idaho.

(1) It is never proper for a man to take a lady's arm. The lady takes the man's arm, when on the street at night. (2) Yes, quite proper. (3) A perfectly proper and formal way for a lady to receive an introduction is to say, "I am pleased to meet you," and repeat the name of the person introduced. If you wish to be less formal it is perfectly proper to offer your hand, though the elder lady usually offers her's first.

Dear Miss Brooks,

I am very interested in your easy corner "Just Between You and Me." I hope you will answer my questions. (1) I was born December 14, 1908. What is my lucky day, color, flower and month? (2) Which do you think the best for a girl to enter—teaching or stenography? I have some inclination for teaching, but stenography seems so much easier. (3) I have a rather bad disposition. How can I improve it? Little things irritate me so. I have a rather quick temper and am very stubborn. I try to be pleasant sometimes, but it doesn't seem to help and I often suggest to you and your Corner. Yours sincerely, BOOKWORM, Idaho.

You are welcome. (1) For those born in December Thursday is said to be their lucky day; February and June the months; flower, geranium; color, gold, red and green. (2) This depends so much upon the position you are better fitted for. If you are desirous of your case of disposition correctly, it would seem that it would eliminate the thought of teaching, for if there is one position which requires more patience and sweetness to fill successfully, than another, it surely is that of teaching. Serving the public in any capacity requires amiability, patience, and gentleness, to be at all successful. The world in general has little use or regard for the irritable, surly, impatient, unwilling to please person; and they always have difficulty in obtaining a position and still more difficulty in retaining it. Now while you are young and have a disposition which may be moulded into the beautiful and lovable, is the time to build a character which will be a blessing to yourself and very one you come in contact with. Time, place, or environment will not overcome traits of character such as you describe, without the desire and effort on your part; so when I next hear from you, I am sure you will have made the necessary effort and are winning. (See answer to Dora.) I wish you a bright and happy New Year.

Dear Miss Brooks:

I have been reading your corner for some time and have a few questions I wish you would answer for me. I am a boy of fifteen years of age, and have carried a six-shooter over since I was big enough to hold it up; and as the world is getting more civilized I would like to know whether to go on carrying my gun or lay it aside, take off my flannel shirt and chaps, and go with the rest of the world. WYOMING GUNMAN.

No, I beg of you don't do it! We don't want to lose the truly, cowboy (I do not like the word "gunman"). We may need you to take care of those truly gunners who are sending their guns and pistols so recklessly late. The big-hearted, when-and-cowboy is a joy and as refreshing as a shower in August. You are moving with the times, I am sure, in regard to carrying a gun, but I am sure, in regard to carrying a gun, that is what counts. Aren't cowboys still needed in the cow country in which we live? It's a wonderful way to live, isn't it? Write again and tell me all about it, and if you don't really feel as I do about the cowboy.